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THE MEDICAL LANGUAGE OF ST. LUKE. II.⁵

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WHEN we turn to the Acts of the Apostles we find that in all parts of the book medical phraseology may be traced, and this similarity of language may be used, not only as a further proof of the identity of authorship between the third gospel and Acts, but also in proof of the unity of authorship of the latter book.

In the first half of Acts, chaps. 1-12, we have incidents of healing and incidents of judgment; in connection with both classes of incident the writing is characteristic of a medical man. Chap. 3 describes the healing of the lame beggar at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. The word for feet (*βάσεις*, 3:7) is constantly employed in the LXX, but there is only one parallel to its use here, viz., Wisd. 13:18, although it is also found in the same sense in Plato and in Josephus. But it was constantly employed and defined by medical writers; instances may be quoted from Hippocrates, Dioscorides, Galen, Aretæus. This word, therefore, and the more precise *σφυδρά*, "ankles," a technical medical term, although also found in classical Greek, are words which we might fairly expect to come from the pen of a physician. In the phrase "immediately . . . received strength" we note, not only the characteristic *παραχρήμα*, but also the verb *στερεώω*, which, although frequently employed in the LXX, was also in frequent use as a technical medical term, and is found in Luke alone of New Testament writers. Its frequent employment, as also the adjective *στερεός*, with *ὁστὰ* would make it a very natural term in connection with the nouns *βάσεις* and *σφυδρά*. Nor must we forget to notice what we may call the medical notes of the case—the fact that the man had never walked, that the lameness had lasted over forty years, and the progressive steps by which the recovery is marked—the leaping

⁵ Concluded from the BIBLICAL WORLD for October, 1902, pp. 260-71.

up, the standing, the walking. In the healing of Æneas (Acts 9:33) we have not only the same characteristic note of time, but also the characteristic technical *παρὰλελυμένος* to describe one sick of the palsy (see above on Luke 5:18), and in 9:40, in the restoration of Tabitha to life, we have not only the verb *ἀνακαθίζειν* (used only by Luke, see above on Luke 7:15), but the whole scene and the circumstantial details are quite in the style of medical description (so Hobart, *in loc.*).

In Acts 5:16 another striking word is found in connection with the earlier miracles of healing. The writer speaks of those who were vexed with unclean spirits, *ὀχλουμένους*. The word in the Greek is found only here in the New Testament, while in Luke 6:18 we have the compound verb *ἐνοχλέω* (according to Westcott and Hort, R. V.), used nowhere else in the New Testament in connection with disease. In Hippocrates we have *ὀχλέω* used with *θεραπεύω* in the immediate context, and the same verb is found conjoined in the two instances given from Luke. It is quite true that the simple verb *ὀχλέω* is found once in Tobit 6:8, denoting the disturbances caused by an evil spirit, and that the compound verb *ἐνοχλέω* is used several times of being troubled with sickness, in the LXX. Yet the frequency of the two verbs in medical writers not only leads Dr. J. Weiss to draw special attention to them as examples of technical medical terms in Luke, but Dr. Zahn also notes that another compound, *παρενοχλέω* (Acts 15:19), is peculiar to Luke in the New Testament; this word is often found in the LXX, but is also characteristic of medical phraseology.⁶

One more instance of miraculous healing in the first part of Acts is noteworthy. In Acts 9:18 Ananias lays his hands on Saul, and straightway there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, *εὐθέως ἀπέπεσον ἀπὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτοῦ ὥσπερ λεπίδες* (T. R.). Here we have another remarkable *combination* of medical terms. Dr. Hobart (see also Zahn) is able to quote no less than three instances from Galen in which both *ἀποπίπτειν* and *λεπίς* are

⁶On the distinction, drawn by Luke more frequently than by the other evangelists, between disease and demoniacal possession, see HOBART (p. 13), PLUMMER (p. 65), and also RENDALL's note on Acts 16:18.

found conjoined as in this verse in Acts, to say nothing of the separate technical use of *λεπίς* in Hippocrates and Dioscorides. It may be added that the two words are used only by Luke in the New Testament, and that, although the noun occurs some six times in the LXX, it does not occur in the same sense as here.

In this early portion of Acts we have two incidents of judgment: the sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira, and the loathsome death of Herod. In each narrative we have the word *ἐκψύχειν*, which is used only by Luke in the New Testament and is used by him in three places: Acts 5:5, 10; 12:23. It is true that the verb occurs twice in the LXX (see Hatch and Redpath's *Concordance*), but it is not employed in the same sense as here, and it is not found in classical Greek. Yet it is frequently used in medical phraseology, while Zahn also draws attention to the fact that four derivatives of *ψύχειν* are used by Luke, and by him alone. In the description of the death of Herod the compound word *σκοληκόβρωτος*, "eaten of worms," is one which we might expect from a medical man. It is found only here in the New Testament, and nowhere in the LXX, although a similar disease is apparently referred to in 2 Macc. 9:5 f., and a similar phrase is used of a similar disease in Plutarch. Hobart, it is true, gives three instances of the application of the word by Theophrastus to a disease in plants; but nothing was more natural than that a physician should be acquainted with botanical terms, and that he should employ the expression of a disease of the body; for, although the actual term is not so applied in the medical writers, yet its component parts are so used, *e. g.*, *βιβρώσκω* of the eating away of the flesh by disease, and *σκόληξ* by Dioscorides and Galen of worms in sores or in the intestines.

Before we pass on we may note that in this first part of Acts we have a very remarkable expression which Hobart, Zahn, and Plummer regard as primarily medical. In 10:11, the description of the vision vouchsafed to Peter at Joppa, we are told of a great sheet let down by four corners. Both *ῥόνη* and *ἄρχαί*, in their sense here, are peculiar to Luke in the New Testament,

but in medical language *ἀρχαί* was the technical term for ends of bandages, and Galen especially remarks on this use of the word. It is quite true that in the LXX (Exod. 36:24 [39:17]) *ἀρχαί* is used of the extremities of the high-priest's breastplate, to which rings were attached for fastening it upon the ephod, and that references to a similar use of the word are given in Herodotus and Diodorus Siculus (see Grimm-Thayer's *Lexicon*); it is also, no doubt, true that *ὀθόνη* is employed in classical Greek for a sail-cloth or a sail, although it does not occur in the LXX. But Hobart is able to give us a whole series of passages in which *ἀρχή* is found in connection with *ὀθόνη*, *ὀθόνιον*, in medical phraseology, so that we have in the combination *ἀρχαὶ ὀθόνης* a technical medical phrase which a physician might naturally introduce.

We turn to chaps. 13, 14 of Acts, and here, in a section of the book with regard to which attempts have been made to treat it as a separate document, standing quite apart so far as authorship is concerned, we have two miracles which furnish material for our inquiry. In 13:11, in the description of the blindness of Elymas, the words *ἀχλὺς, ἐπέπεσεν* (so T. R., and B. Weiss), and *σκότος*, since Dioscorides combines in one passage *σκοτώματα* and *ἀχλὺς*, may be classed as medical terms (see *Expositor's Greek Testament*, II, *in loc.*). In Acts 14:8 the lame man at Lystra is described as *ἀδύνατος τοῖς ποσίν*. The adjective is used only here in the New Testament in this sense, and it is frequent in medical writers; but we must be careful not to lay too much stress upon it, as we find it at least twice in Tobit, in the phrase *ἀδύνατος τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς*. But in the expression *ἀνάστηθι ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας σου ὀρθός* we have again a collocation of a verb and adjective which is frequent in medical writers (see also *Expositor's Greek Testament*, II, *in loc.*). It is, moreover, noteworthy that *ὀρθός* is used nowhere else in the New Testament, except in Heb. 12:13 in a figurative sense; that Luke alone uses a cognate word, *ἀνορθόω*, in a similar sense to the adjective in this passage; and that in Galen we find the simple verb *ὀρθόω* combined with *τὸ κῶλον ἀδύνατον*. Here, too, we have the characteristic *ἀπενίξειν*, as also the characteristic note of the time of the duration of the disease.

In Acts 20:9 Eutychus is described as borne down by deep sleep during Paul's preaching at Troas. The description, as given in the original, contains two distinct expressions, the present participle *καταφερόμενος*, "becoming oppressed with deep sleep," and then the aorist participle *κατενεχθείς*, "being still more overcome by the sleep." The verb *καταφέρεισθαι* is found in the LXX, but not in the same sense as here; and it is used by Luke alone in the New Testament. It may also be admitted that it is used by Josephus of falling asleep (*Antiq.*, II, v, 5), and so by Aristotle (Wetstein); but it is not surprising that Zahn should regard the whole phrase in Acts as medical, and such as a medical man would employ, if we remember that the verb was not only combined with *ὑπνος* in medical treatises, but that medical writers would employ various terms to express the different degrees of sleep, *e. g.*, the adjective *βαθύς* as here.

The vivid scenes connected with Paul's shipwreck, in one of the most important of the "we"-sections, afford us further testimony. In Acts 28:4-6 Zahn traces a medical hand in no less than four expressions. The first of these, *θήριον*, is employed in particular by medical writers to denote a viper; in the same way they employed *θηριακή* to describe an antidote made chiefly from the flesh of vipers. The two verbs, *πίμπρασθαι*, "to swell," and *καταπίπτειν*, "to fall down," are both peculiar to Luke in the New Testament. And, although the cognate form *πρήθω* is used to denote a swelling of the body in the LXX (Numb. 5:21, 22, 27), while the second verb was no doubt a common one, yet the first was the usual medical term for inflammation, and the second was frequently adopted by medical writers to describe the sudden falling down in a fit, or from a wound. With regard to *προσδοκάω*, "to expect," upon which Zahn lays stress as used so frequently by Luke, the cognate noun *προσδοκία* being peculiar to him, the frequent use of both verb and noun in classical Greek and in the LXX may well make us hesitate to attach too much weight to the alleged medical use here. But it may be fairly said that both verb and noun are quite in the manner of medical writing, as they denote constantly not only the expectation of the result of an illness, but the expectation of the approach of

pain or paroxysms. Zahn also points out that the verb in question is closely conjoined in the passage before us with another expression which he calls a specific medical term, *ἄτοπος*. This adjective is used three times by Luke, and only once elsewhere in the New Testament, by Paul; but it must be admitted that the verb *προσδοκάω* is found united with it in Josephus (*Antiq.*, VIII, xiv, 4), and so, too, in Herodian (IV, 11) in the same sense as here, and that *ἄτοπος* is found several times in the LXX with an ethical meaning. Hobart, however, furnishes abundant proof that the word was of frequent medical use in denoting any unusual symptoms of disease, or anything deadly or fatal. Thus it is used by Hippocrates in connection with *πυρετός*, and, more strikingly, in relation to the passage before us, by Galen of the bite of a rabid dog and of poison (Hobart, p. 289).

But if, in spite of the great authority of Zahn, we fail to find in the incident just narrated specific medical terms, there is in the incident which immediately follows ample justification for the same writer's description of the terms employed. While Paul is still at Malta the father of Publius lay sick (*συνεχόμενον*, 28:8) of fever and dysentery (*πυρετοῖς καὶ δυσεντερίᾳ*). Of the participle we have already spoken (see above on Luke 4:38). It was constantly used by medical writers in connection with disease, and it is employed here precisely as in the gospel with the noun *πυρετός*. But it may be further noted that the use of the plural *πυρετοί* is quite medical, although it is found in other writers, as, *e. g.*, in Demosthenes and Lucian. But, while each of the other evangelists uses the singular *πυρετός*, Luke alone introduces the noun in the plural number. The noun "dysentery," *δυσεντερία*, is also peculiar to Luke in the New Testament; but not only is it frequently found in medical writers in connection with *πυρετός* or *πυρετοί*, but Hippocrates furnishes us with a phrase very similar to this used by Luke (see above on Luke 4:38).

Further, in the narrative of Paul's shipwreck we come across two or three words and phrases which are very suggestive, quite apart from the miraculous elements of the story. Thus Zahn, Vogel, and others call attention to the phrase *ἐπιμελείας τυχεῖν* (Acts 27:3), rendered in R. V., margin, "to receive attention."

The noun is used in the same sense in the LXX, and frequently by Greek prose writers; but only by Luke in the New Testament. Here is a term which was constantly employed in medical phraseology for the care bestowed upon the sick; in Luke 10:34 occurs the only employment of the cognate verb *ἐπιμελεῖσθαι*, in a similar meaning, in the New Testament. There is another word in connection with the same incident (Acts 27:3) which, although it might no doubt be used by a cultured Greek, was at all events just the word which a medical man would introduce, "and Julius treated Paul *kindly* (*φιλανθρώπως*)."
 Certainly we have the same Greek phrase for "treating kindly" in classical Greek, and the adverb is used in 2 and 3 Maccabees. But in the New Testament this word is used by Luke alone, and the cognate noun *φιλανθρωπία* occurs in this same "we"-section, a noun used only once elsewhere in the New Testament, by Paul (Titus 3:4). This collocation of noun and adverb in Luke becomes more significant when we remember that, although both words are used in the LXX, medical writers spoke of their profession as the "philanthropic" profession, and of "philanthropy" as ever accompanying a physician's true love for his calling; and that a more generous diet provided for the sick was described as *φιλανθρωποτέρα τροφή* (Hobart, p. 296).

Again, in this same "we"-section we have another word, *παραινέω*, which was no doubt common in classical Greek, and which occurs some three or four times in 2 and 3 Maccabees, but which is found only twice in the New Testament. In Acts 27:9 "Paul *exhorted* them, saying," and, in 27:22, "and now I *exhort* you to be of good cheer." But Hobart (p. 271) is able to cite several instances from medical treatises in which the word is used of a physician giving his advice. And the advice was "to be of good cheer (*εὐθυμεῖν*);" this word also, with the exception of James 5:13, is used only by Luke, but frequently employed, with its cognate adjective and adverb, also peculiar to Luke, by medical writers, of the sick keeping up their spirits (as opposed to *ἀθυμία* and *δυσθυμία*, see Hobart, p. 279). It would seem, therefore, that Dr. Hobart is not without grounds for maintaining that *εὐθυμεῖν παραινῶ* has also the appearance of

a doctor's expression. Sir J. Hawkins has remarked (*Horae Synopticae*, p. 153) that among the words which occur in the "we"-sections as being peculiar to them there are only two of importance, and that one of them is *παραινῶ*. Is it not quite conceivable that the medical usage and training of Luke may go far to account for the introduction of the verb twice in this passage, especially when we remember that included in Paul's words on this same occasion (27:33) we have the curious coincidence with the exact words of Galen to which Hobart and Zahn call attention: "This is the fourteenth day," says Paul, "that ye continue fasting," *ἄσιτοι διατελείτε*; and precisely the same collocation occurs in Galen: *εἴ ποτε ἄσιτος διετέλεσεν*.

At the same time it must be admitted that this last example shows us how careful we must be before concluding from such a coincidence, however noteworthy, that the writer in Acts was employing medical phraseology. This same collocation of *ἄσιτοι* and *διατελεῖν* is found in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (see Weststein, *in loc.*); he writes, *ἄσιτοι οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ ἀθεράπευτοι τὴν ἐσπέραν ἐκείνην διετέλεσαν*. There are several of these striking combinations of words common to medical writers, to which Hobart (p. 34) draws attention; but they all require careful consideration. Thus in Acts 9:29 we read *οἱ δὲ ἐπεχειροῦν ἀνελεῖν αὐτόν*; in Galen we have the same collocation, which Hobart quotes (p. 210): *ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἱατρὸς ἀνελεῖν ἐπεχειρεῖ τὸ νόσημα*; but in 3 Macc. 7:5 we have also the same collocation, *ἐπεχειρήσαν ἀνελεῖν*. It should, however, in fairness also be noted that *ἐπιχειρεῖν* and *ἀναιρεῖν* are words frequently employed by medical writers, that the former is used only by Luke in the New Testament, and that the latter, as Zahn notes, is used by him no less than twenty-one times, as against three in the other New Testament books. So, again, the word *ἀνάπηρος* is used by Luke alone in the New Testament twice in one passage (Luke 14:13, 21), in close combination with *χωλός* and *τυφλός*, but the same combination of the same words is also found in Plato (*Crito*, p. 53 A), and a parallel to the use of *ἀπαλλάσσω* in connection with *νόσος* (Acts 19:12) may also be found in a similar combination in Plato (*Eryx.*, 401 C).

Further, both Hobart and Zahn call attention to Luke's use (Acts 21:39) of ἄσσημος with πόλις, "a citizen of no mean city." In medical language the adjective was used of a disease having no distinctive symptoms, and it is applied to a city by Hippocrates in the same sense as by Luke. But the term occurs two or three times in the LXX, and Euripides uses it of Athens (*Ion*, 8). So, again, the verb ἐπιχειρεῖν is not only used by Luke alone in the New Testament, but Hippocrates begins his treatise *De Prisca Medicina* in very similar terms to Luke 1:1, ὁκόσοι ἐπεχείρησαν περὶ ἰητρικῆς λέγειν ἢ γράφειν; and Galen, too, commences one of his treatises very similarly. Here, again, we find a word used frequently in technical medical phraseology, and used in Luke's writings in a secondary sense; but we must remember that Josephus (*Contra Apionem*, 2) employs the verb very much as Luke and Hippocrates have done when he writes, οἱ τὰς ἱστορίας ἐπιχειρήσαντες συγγράφειν.

But with all deductions the fact still remains that in Luke, and in Luke alone among the New Testament writers, this frequent recurrence of medical words and phrases is found; and, without dwelling upon such words as παρακολουθεῖν, ἀκριβῶς, διήγησις in Luke's preface (the first two words are found combined, not only in Galen, but in Josephus, while the third was constantly used by medical writers to denote, not only medical treatises, but also those on other subjects), it must always remain a significant fact that no less than ten or twelve words peculiar to Acts are also found in the preface to the treatise of Dioscorides, *De Materia Medica*. It is not merely the number of words that is significant, but also the fact, to which Zahn, J. Weiss, and Vogel call attention, that Dioscorides was born and lived at Anazarbus, in Cilicia, about fifty miles from Tarsus. Further, he was a contemporary of Luke and possibly a fellow-student in the famous university of Tarsus, inasmuch as he was at work between 40 and 60 A. D. At no great distance off the Carian coast there was one of the oldest and greatest of the medical schools of antiquity; it was on the island of Cos, the birth-place of Hippocrates in the fifth century B. C., and not only his birth-place, but the home and the scene of his medical practice. It is not, therefore, sur-

prising, but perfectly natural, that a similarity of diction should characterize the writings of Hippocrates, Dioscorides, Aretæus, Galen, and, we may add, of Luke the physician, trained, as they all probably were, in the medical schools of Asia Minor (Hobart, *op. cit.*, p. 31, and Plummer, *Commentary on St. Luke*, p. 6). It is a very suggestive thought that Paul, Luke, and Dioscorides may all have been students together at Tarsus; and closely allied with this is the further possibility that the friendship of Paul and Luke may account for the peculiar and frequent use of medical terms in the pastoral epistles (see Findlay, *Epistles of Paul*, p. 213, and Plumptre, *Expositor*, Ser. I, Vol. IV, pp. 134 ff.).

The result, then, of our inquiry seems to be that the rich vocabulary of the writer of the third gospel and of Acts points to two facts: (1) that this author was a cultured, well-read Greek; (2) that he was also a medical man. This combination fairly accounts for the peculiarities which we have noted, viz., the frequent use of classical writers and of the LXX, as also of words and phrases markedly characteristic of, if not peculiar to, the great medical writers of antiquity. Dr. Blass, in his *Philology of the Gospels*, p. 186, asks this question: Must we not accept it for a certainty that Luke the physician of Antioch had read his Homer? And to this we may venture to add another question: Must we not accept it for a certainty that Luke the physician had read his Hippocrates? In the writings of the historian Polybius we find many of Aristotle's philosophical terms, employed not in the technical sense of the schools, but in a secondary and looser meaning, and it has been urged that this might be explained by the philosophic cast of the historian's mind. And if we find in the third gospel and in Acts a whole series of words frequently employed in medical language and in medical treatises, but used in these New Testament books in a secondary and less technical meaning, is it unfair to infer that their constant presence points to the hand of a medical man, trained in the medical schools, and conversant with medical terms?